



NEJAC's Public Dialogues on Urban Revitalization and Brownfields

Outreach and Special Projects Staff (5101)

Quick Reference Fact Sheet

EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative is designed to empower States, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield is a site, or portion thereof, that has actual or perceived contamination and an active potential for redevelopment or reuse. EPA's Brownfields Initiative strategies include funding pilot programs and other research efforts, clarifying liability issues, entering into partnerships, conducting outreach activities, developing job training programs, and addressing environmental justice concerns.

BACKGROUND

On January 25, 1995, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the original Brownfields Action Agenda to identify and address the goals of the Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative. Designed to involve community groups and environmental justice advocates in the Initiative, the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) held a series of one-day dialogues across the country. The theme for these dialogues was "Urban Revitalization and Brownfields: Envisioning Healthy and Sustainable Communities."

Key objectives of the dialogues included:

- Dissemination of information on urban revitalization and brownfields;
- Reception of commentary from representatives of social institutions and stakeholder groups, including churches, community-based organizations, universities, philanthropies, labor business, local, State and Federal agencies, and other affected parties;
- Development of partnerships and protocols with affected communities; and
- Recommendations for brownfields policy guidance, grant criteria, regulatory developments, and program activities.

PUBLIC DIALOGUES HELD

- June 5, 1995 - Boston, Massachusetts
- June 7, 1995 - Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- June 9, 1995 - Detroit, Michigan
- July 18, 1995 - Oakland, California
- July 20, 1995 - Atlanta, Georgia

RESULTS OF THE DIALOGUES

There were over 500 participants in the public dialogues. Their input has had a demonstrated impact on the Brownfields Initiative. For example:

- Participants in Philadelphia emphasized the need for community involvement. Consequently, EPA is now verifying the level of community involvement in all brownfields pilot applications.
- Participants in Atlanta emphasized the need for more effective interagency coordination. Consequently, EPA held the Brownfields Pilots National Workshop in February 1996.
- In Detroit, site visits and presentations provided clear examples of brownfields issues and progress. As a result, NEJAC held one of its national meetings in Detroit in May, 1996.

NEXT STEPS

On matters relating to environmental justice, EPA's experience with the public dialogues has reaffirmed its commitment to provide communities with the opportunity to have a direct role in helping shape the course of the Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative. The Agency is now reviewing the NEJAC final report, "Environmental Justice, Urban Revitalization, and Brownfields: The Search for Authentic Signs of Hope," released in December 1996. EPA will be examining ways to integrate recommendations made by NEJAC into the process of revitalizing urban areas and assure ongoing empowered participation. This report is available through the EPA RCRA/Superfund Hotline, (800) 424-9346 and the NEJAC Homepage:

<http://www.prcemi.com:80/nejac/>

CONTACTS

Charles Lee
NEJAC Waste Subcommittee
(212) 870-2077

Kent Benjamin
U.S. EPA
(202) 260-2822
benjamin.kent@epamail.epa.gov

Katherine Dawes
U.S. EPA-OSWER
(202) 260-8394
dawes.katherine@epamail.epa.gov

Visit the EPA Brownfields Website at:
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields>